



LEARNING GODS

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The words of faiths and beliefs echoing through this tiny book came as a result of those shapeless ideas that were compounded with aspirations to accomplish something satisfying and desire to be of some assist for those aspiring minds who have kept that courage to live and achieve intact even today, no matter how unjust the situation was or will be.

A child learns to speak after emulating words and thoughts from his parents. This whole mechanism surrounding the cycle of emulating, reciprocating and excelling begins from the very moment a creature acquires his senses, be it a human or an animal. Learning is a natural phenomenon that must be embraced with both arms of conscience wide open. It is through this passage of assimilation of information and dissemination through conversation, a human can traverse through the path of tranquility and freedom. Much of what we think and how we make meaning of it, gives revelation of our identity and this set of our attitude is what designs a frame of perceptions known as our mindset.

It is this mindset that dictates why someone is joyous and why someone anxious; why one is stable and another completely miserable; why someone walks with a pride and stature but compels the other to ponder every second of his life to understand why he is a failure. These all events happen between the two different mindsets at the same time and in similar circumstances. This mindset is made up of notions which may exist in reality or that which only exists in the fictitious world we have created for our own satisfaction.

There are hundreds of such judgements and convictions that we have developed throughout the years and these convictions consciously or subconsciously decide how we are going to carry ourselves each and every day. This theory of convictions has been best exemplified by Mandela and Gandhi, who showed to the world how changing our approach even slightly towards reacting at things can have profound effects; capable enough to write its own history and create wonders.

In this book, we will go through the stories of those great people who showcased that even when the dimness of hopelessness may surround one's virtuous ambitions from everywhere, it is still possible to light the candle of

rejuvenation and illuminate the room of aspirations once again. One of the stories in this book based on the life of Abraham Lincoln is an exemplification of how a persistence displayed by a man has the ability to even turn his previous debacles into a beautiful achievement. His life is an epitome of perseverance and struggle as he bore myriads of failures all his life before he made himself capable to take the office of the President of the United States. The next story of Steve Jobs is another illustration as to how an undying courage of a person has the ability to rebuild an empire, even after being expelled from his own company that he founded. J.K. Rowling's narrative is of one single mother who tackled with adversaries her entire youth, all alone. And even in the edge of complete hopelessness, when the harsh situations poked her often to put an end to her life, she chose to recollect her senses instead and travelled on a literary adventure to feed her young child. As fate awards the braves suitably, today Harry Potter is a global phenomenon among the people of all ages. Similar are the stories of rest of the other personalities who were presented with a plethora of setbacks in their life, but every time they could muster courage and used the same setback to bounce back even higher in their life.

All it takes most of times to heal a broken heart and invigorate the defeated senses is some wise words and tales of inspirations of those who have had courage to pave their way from confinement to freedom even in the most drastic situations. It's my privilege to share ten such stories of those leaders who rose from the ashes as a phoenix and drafted their own distinct stories that are still worthy of adulation and emulation even after years. The stories are in no way intended to be a biography but rather reflect on those moments of their life where they had to go through the darkest of times and how they eventually managed to conquer the same. The stories are written in plain and simple English and are intended to be as crisp and precise as possible. Hope this little book can bring a little smile to your face.

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Stephen dreams his execution



This is the story of that man who made even those men lament over his death who thought disability is a hurdle for a lifetime.

Born on 8th January, 1942, Stephen William Hawking was a renowned physicist, cosmologist, and author. Interestingly, he was born on the 300th death anniversary of another world-renowned physicist, Galileo Galilei.

In his childhood, he was known for his unconventional way of solving

problems and his ability to grasp the complex mathematical problems and equations in physics quickly. However, his early school life was far from even being average, as he was third from the bottom in his class. But his eccentric quality of analyzing things differently from what others perceived, never failed to impress his professors.

As told by his physics professor at University College, Robert Berman, he was an extraordinary student who had the potential to solve the theorems and solutions in a rather unique way that no one else could. After completing his university education from the University College, he enrolled at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he studied theoretical astronomy and cosmology for his doctorate program. At Cambridge, he started showing symptoms related to neuro-muscular problems, which was later diagnosed to be Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). His physical movements began to disrupt severely and this disease gradually paralyzed him over the years. He was told that he wouldn't survive for more than two years as life-expectancy of anyone suffering from ALS ranges from a mere two to five years.

Despite his suffering, he did not wish to gain sympathy from anyone. In fact, he wanted everyone to treat him the same way they did to any normal person who has desires, emotions and dreams. He fought a long battle to ensure that universities and public spaces are disabled friendly, but he always detached himself from his disease and wanted to feel and work just the way a normal person did.

After he became paralyzed and bound in a wheelchair, there came a time in his life when everyone started losing hope on him. One night, Stephen had a dream that he was going to be executed and his death was only a few inches away from him. This dream left a deep impact on his mind and with a sudden realization and fear that he might not even live long enough to earn his PhD, he dedicated all his energies to his work and research. In one of his interviews, he mentioned – *“My expectations were reduced to zero when I was 21. Everything since then has been a bonus.”*



He had to uplift his life from what it looked like a complete misery and for that he began to change his perceptions and lifestyle in a way that his life soon became a marvel which he believes might have never happened had he not got ridden by his disabilities. He later said, *“Before my condition was diagnosed, I had been very bored with life, there had not seemed to be anything worth doing.”*

Luckily for him, the disease did not progress rapidly and he decided to continue with his research and active public engagements. A fellow scientist at Cambridge developed a synthetic speech device and Stephen could now speak using a touchpad through this device. This became the voice for Stephen Hawking for the rest of his life. And with it, Hawking, in a completely new form to the world, was just born. However, despite the sophisticated technology used in the device, it would often be a rather time-consuming process for him to communicate.

It was the year 1974, when the world was going to appreciate the ingenuity of Stephen Hawking. He came up with the idea that black holes leak energy and fade away to nothing and became successful in demonstrating that Einstein's General Theory of Relativity implied that space and time have a *beginning* in the Big Bang and its *end* in black holes. He translated complex models in physics into lucid and concise theories that could be easily apprehended by a common person. He explained scientific concepts in a layman language that made everyone study and utilize these concepts in their practical life. All of this made Stephen immensely popular. His book, *A Brief History of Time*, was meant for readers with no prior knowledge of the universe. This contribution was appreciated by his readers so much that *A Brief History of Time* went onto become the Bestseller and managed to be in the top lists for over 230 weeks. The book has managed to sell more than 25 million copies.

He was so devoted towards the upliftment of science that he declined the knighthood offered to him in the late 1990s because of the issues he had with the government's funding for science.

Stephen had to suffer with such an acute disease that could claim one's life within 2 to 3 years. He was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis when he was just 21 years old but managed to survive until he was 76.

Nobody has been able to precisely explain the reason for his long survival but one simplification for his prolonged life-span could be his extreme love and die-hard passion for science and research. He himself believed that his branch of study of Theoretical Physics always kept his mind young and alive. A small role in his achievements might also have been that of the dream of execution, which compelled him to dedicate all his energies towards his work and research, after convincing him that he had just a little time to live and flourish his dreams. Some break in tragedy, some create history out of tragedy. And Stephen Hawking chose to create a history.

The rise of Alibaba



"30 times I got rejected, I went for a job with the police and they said no you are not good. When KFC came to China, 24 people went for the job and 23 got accepted. I was the only one to get rejected, I had also applied to Harvard Business School but was rejected 10 times."

These were his stories of rejections; a smiling Jack Ma was sharing in an interview with Charlie Rose at the World Economic Forum Davos.

And truly indeed, if we have to search for a quintessential rag to riches story, Jack Ma fits in it perfectly.

Jack Ma was born as Ma Yun in a place called Hangzhou in China on 10th September, 1964. His parents were traditional musicians and they didn't make enough to be considered even as a middle-class family. From a very young age, Jack was fascinated in learning English but in the communist mainland, no preference was given to any language other than Mandarin Chinese. He spent his early mornings riding on his bike to a nearby park, where he would give free tours to foreigners and learn English from them in return. It was during that time, a foreign girl gave him the nickname 'Jack', as his name Ma Yun was hard for her to spell. His love for this language was such that he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English and started working as an English teacher at Hangzhou Dianzi University, on a meagre salary of just \$12 a month.

The path for the most successful entrepreneur of China was however filled with a lot of failures in his youth. As recalled by Jack himself, he failed twice in his primary school examinations, and thrice during his middle school exams. He also failed his university entry exam three times, before finally joining Hangzhou Normal University. He also applied and wrote to Harvard University ten times but was rejected every time. Like in his exams, he also suffered several setbacks when he wanted to build his professional career. He first applied for a police job but due to his physical stature not conforming with the requirements, he was rejected outright. As has now been popularly talked about, he was the only one in the lot of twenty-four people, who was rejected when he went to apply for a job in the KFC.

In one of his interviews, when asked about all his rejections, he replied, *"Well, I think we have to get used to it. We're not that good."* Overcoming the pain of rejections and converting these rejections into opportunities, was what made Jack Ma, the business magnate we know today.

Jack Ma's entry in Technology



After habituating himself with rejections and failures, Jack Ma decided to visit the United States in 1995. It was there he was introduced to computers and the internet for the first time. Computers were very rare to be even seen in China and the concept of Internet was almost non-existent back then in his hometown. Mosaic used to be a popular browser those times and the first thing he typed and searched in the Mosaic browser was 'Beer'. Several results from various

countries popped out. However, when he typed and searched for beer with his

country's name, not a single result related to China was displayed. It was at that instance, Jack Ma decided it was high time for China and the Chinese people to be introduced to the Internet and technology.

Then, young Jack Ma decided to set-up his own new venture. It was an e-commerce startup, an idea completely new to everyone at that time. He chose the name of his venture as *Ali Baba* after a character from an ancient folk tale who was known to be a smart and kind businessman who helped everyone in his village. He persuaded seventeen of his friends to join and invest in his ambitious project. Those initial days proved to be too cumbersome for Ma. He had no capital or office to run his business from and he had to operate his venture from his apartment. Alibaba didn't have any investment from outside investors, but later managed to raise \$20 Million from SoftBank and \$5 Million from Goldman Sachs. Later the company also managed to raise funding from Fidelity Investments among other companies.

Jack Ma and his team drafted a blueprint that would enable their vision to reach in front of large consumers, that would turn their small venture into a successful company. One of such earlier adopted strategies was removing intermediate fees and allowing the sellers to register for free without having to pay any fee in their e-commerce platform. This way the company became successful in setting up and enhancing an online transaction habit among its Chinese customers. As a result, Alibaba became successful in leveraging a large number of consumers to make transactions through their platform and their business started generating revenue through advertisements, customer's data and keyword bidding.

In May 2003, the company launched its Chinese online shopping website and named it *Taobao* and in February 2004, it rolled out its online payment platform *Alipay*. Alibaba and her group companies started being a household name within and outside mainland China. As of fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, the Gross Merchandise Value (metric that measures total value of sales over a

The logo for Taobao.com, featuring the Chinese characters "淘宝网" in a stylized orange font, with "Taobao.com" written in orange below it.

given period) transacted on Taobao alone reached approximately 3.39 trillion yuan (equivalent to \$ 506,370 million).

By July 2019, the mobile base of Alibaba group had grown to approximately 1.1 billion active users and as of the second quarter of 2020, Alibaba's e-commerce properties have been accessed by around 874 million mobiles.

The company that was set up by a spirited young boy from China, who even didn't have an extensive knowledge on technology until 1995, began to prosper and grow every year with such a pace that today it boasts of employing more than 117,000 employees and finding itself as one among the top ten most valuable corporations around the world and the 31st-largest public company in the world, according to the *Forbes* Global 2020 list.

Jack Ma resigned as chairman of the Alibaba group on his 55th birthday on 10th September, 2019. This day also surprisingly coincides with the teacher's day; the same profession of teaching that he had begun his career with.

The man who was rejected 30 times, resigned as the chairman of one of the largest companies of the world, which transformed the concept of e-commerce and business in its entirety. He will be remembered as an epitome of devotion and perseverance who tried and tried until he made his vision a reality.



In his own words:

"If you've never tried, how will you ever know if there's any chance?"
- Jack Ma.

The Musk Factor



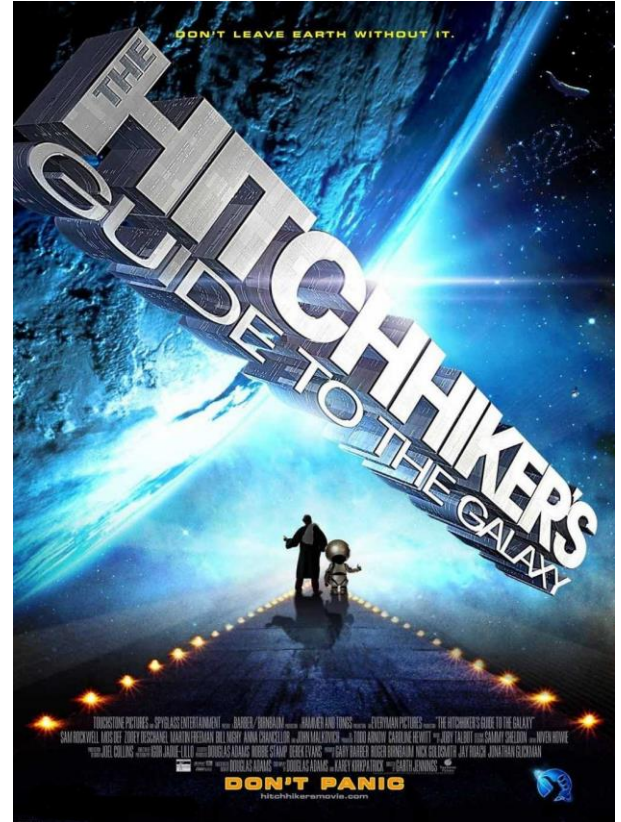
After Jack Ma, next is the story of another tech mogul, Elon Musk, who unlike Jack Ma, believed that computers are smarter than humans. These two took the stage at the 2019 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai and in the debate that ensued between them, they disagreed with each other in context of the Artificial Intelligence's impact and threat to humankind in the future. Musk asserted that people tend to underestimate the capability of AI. He believed that technology and Artificial Intelligence in general is going to be much smarter, even more than the smartest human.

The pragmatic innovator who underscored the impact of Artificial Intelligence throughout his life, was born on 28th June, 1971, in Pretoria, South

Africa to a Canadian mother and South African father. As a young kid, Musk was an outcast day dreamer who used to often get lost in his imaginations and fancy about things. He was such an introvert and a silent guy that once his parents thought he was deaf and took him for a test to check if he had any hearing problems.

Musk often used to get bullied in his school. Once he was thrown down the stairs and was beaten so badly that he fell down unconscious. He used to find solace and relieve his pain by spending most of his time reading books and diverting his attention away from them.

One of such books that influenced Musk deeply was a science fiction book, “Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”. After reading this book, he began to ponder deeply about the space and universe and the impact one can create in the world with the utilization of technology. At the center of the book is the character of a supercomputer which is tasked with finding out the meaning of life. Musk said that the book was illuminating to him because it taught him that sometimes the answer is the easy part but phrasing the question correctly is where the real challenge lies.



When Musk was 10 years old, his parents separated. He began spending more and more time on reading and learning and coding on his computer. By the time he was 12, he had already coded a video game that he named *Blastar*, which was based on rocket ships in outer space. At this tender age, he sold the code of this game to a magazine, *PC and Office Technology*, for \$500.

That was an era of apartheid in South Africa back in those days and it was mandatory under the law for adults to get enrolled in military service. Musk was unwilling to support apartheid and he escaped to Canada in 1988 against his parents’ wishes to avoid compulsory military enrolment. He attended Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, in 1990 and two year later he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, where he received bachelor’s degrees

in physics and economics in 1997. Thereafter, he went to the Stanford University to pursue PhD in energy physics but he left his course only after two days because he felt that a new technology that had surfaced, known as the Internet, had much more potential than studying and working in physics.



In 1995, Musk founded a company called Zip2, that provided city guides and business directories online. Four years later, a popular computer manufacturing company, Compaq, bought the company for \$34 million in stock options and \$307 million in cash.



In 1999, the same year when Zip2 was sold, he utilized proceeds from the sale to co-found an online financial service company, *X.com*. In March 2000, *X.com* merged with *Confinity Inc.* and the merged company was named *Paypal*. Two years later, Musk decided to sell the newly merged company and *Paypal* was sold to eBay for \$1.5 billion in 2001.

In the span of only three years, Musk had already sold two successful companies, as he believed in diversifying over new areas rather than continuing with operations of the existing companies. Musk introduced himself as a space junkie and firmly asserted that, “Humans should be multi-planet species.” But he was very dissatisfied with the costly expenses that were being incurred to launch rockets. This prompted him to institute an aerospace company and on 6th May, 2002, he founded Space Exploration Technologies Corporation (SpaceX) to make more affordable rockets.



The first rocket launched by SpaceX was Falcon 1 (launched in 2006) and the second was a larger Falcon 9 (launched in 2010). As was desired by Musk, both of these rockets were designed at a cost much lower than what was being incurred on rockets that were being launched earlier.

A third rocket, the Falcon Heavy (launched in 2018), was designed to carry 117,000 pounds (53,000 kg) to orbit, nearly twice as much the weight than its largest competitor, the Boeing Company's Delta IV Heavy, and that too at a very economical cost of just one-third of the total cost of Delta. SpaceX has announced the successor to the Falcon 9 and the Falcon Heavy as the "Super Heavy–Starship system". The Super Heavy first stage would be capable of carrying a payload of 100,000 kg (220,000 pounds). The payload would be the Starship, a spacecraft which is designed for providing fast transportation between the cities on Earth and building bases on the Moon and Mars.



On 7th March, 2020, SpaceX launched SpaceX Dragon, which can carry supplies to the International Space Station (ISS). Dragon is intended to carry as many as seven astronauts, and Space X Dragon 2 (Crew Dragon) has already crewed flight, carrying astronauts, Doug Hurley, and Robert Behnken to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2020.

Tesla and Hyperloop

Another name that is inextricably linked with Elon Musk is Tesla. Musk contributed \$6.5 million to Tesla, Inc. in 2004 and the same year he took office as the chairman of the Board of the directors. The company was initially set up focusing on manufacture of three products: electric cars, battery products and solar roofs. The company kept extending its product line by launching sports cars and semi-trucks. In 2006, Tesla introduced its first car, the Roadster, which could travel 244 miles (393 km) on a single charge, making it the fastest car in short to mid-range distances.



In 2010, the company's initial public offering (IPO) raised about \$226 million. Two years later, Tesla introduced the Model S Sedan, with an EPA range of 402 miles (647 km), higher than that of any other battery electric car and was acclaimed by critics for its performance and design. In 2019, the US magazine, *Motor Trend*, named the Tesla Model S as the ultimate "car of the year" over the magazine's 70-years old history. The company won further praise for its Model X Luxury SUV, which came into production from 2015.

Tesla's Model X cars are distinguished for their unique falcon-wing doors. On 11th December 2017, Forbes named Model X 100D as the best vehicle of the year.



The exemplary designs and innovations, supported by the vision of Elon Musk, made Tesla Inc., a great success and as of 2020, Tesla's market capitalization sits at around \$450 billion, making it the most valuable auto maker in the world. (Second in position is Toyota, with a market capitalization of \$216 billion, less than half of Tesla).

In 2013, Musk came up with an idea of an alternate faster system, called *Hyperloop*, which would cut down both the cost and time. It could travel 350 miles (560 km) between Los Angeles and San Francisco in 35 minutes at its top speed of 760 miles (approximately 1,220 km) per hour, at nearly the speed of sound (speed of sound is approximately 767 miles per hour). As of now, *Hyperloop* is under development, with Musk stating that between running

SpaceX and Tesla, he has not been able to sufficiently devote time for *Hyperloop's* development.

Musk founded a nonprofit artificial intelligence research laboratory in 11th December, 2015, with a mission of ensuring that the Artificial Intelligence's benefits are as widely and evenly distributed as possible.

In July 2016, Elon co-founded, Neuralink Corporation, a neurotechnology start up that aims to build a powerful brain and machine interface, a device that can be inserted through a relatively simple surgery. Its short-term goal as of now is to build a device that can help people with specific health conditions. In December of the same year, he founded infrastructure and tunnel construction services company, *The Boring Company*, to reduce traffic in metropolitan areas by improving the technology inside the boring tunnels and developing a fully electric and autonomous transport system that works well inside those tunnels with no congestion.

Elon Musk is also the chairman of the Musk Foundation that he founded in 2002. The foundation has its main objectives of providing solar power energy systems in disaster hit areas, carrying human space explorations and imparting pediatric research and science and engineering educations.

Forbes constantly places him in their topmost lists of the most powerful men. A short biography of a reclusive and extremely introverted child who was bullied throughout his childhood but who dreamt to change the world one day ends here. And yes, he did change the world.

Lincoln – ‘The Consistent Failure’



Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, is famously known to be a proponent of equality and the hero who emancipated and eradicated slavery in his home country. Today, he is widely regarded and revered as one of the greatest leaders the world ever saw.

But this leader who is consistently chosen as the best president the United States ever had, was also a consistent failure and saw numerous obstacles on his journey to eventual presidency.

Lincoln was born on 12th February, 1809, as the second child of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln in a small one room log cabin in Kentucky.

When Abraham was seven, the family moved to Indiana. During those times, an illness called milk sickness was widespread in the United States. His family soon became affected by the illness, which eventually became the cause of death of several of his family members, including the person he loved the most, his mother.

Lincoln had no option but to stay at home to earn, which barred him from receiving education at school. But because of his quest for destiny and desire to learn, he started studying on his own. He was a self-taught person throughout his life. Even the law degree he would earn in his later years was a result of his intense self-study.

When he touched adulthood, he was engaged to be married to the love of his life, Ann Rutledge, in 1835. Tragically, she died from typhoid at a young age of only twenty-two, even before she could marry Lincoln. Historians write that this loss affected Lincoln so much that he suffered from severe depression and could not recover from it for years. The wounds began to heal with the passage of time and he found his soulmate in Mary Todd, whom he married

on November 4, 1842. But the omen in Lincoln's life were far from over yet. He had four sons with Mary Todd and three of them died in their infancy. His first son, Edward, died of tuberculosis, aged just 3; while his second child, William, died when he was only 11. The fourth son, Thomas, died when he was 18 due to heart failure. With all his dearest possessions leaving him one after the other forever, he had such a severe nervous breakdown that he was confined for six months at home.

The predicaments in Lincoln's life were not confined to his personal life alone. His political career was filled with even more obstacles. In 1832, when he was just 23, he lost his job. At the same time, he also lost his bid for State Legislature. In 1838, he lost his bid to become Speaker in the Illinois House of Representatives. In 1848, at the age of 39-years, he lost in his bid of becoming the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington D.C. Ten years later, he was defeated in his quest to become a U.S. Senator.



The timeline of the failures that this great man endured, until something big happened in 1861:

1831 – Failed in business

1832 – Defeated for Legislature

1833 – Second failure in business

1836 – Suffered nervous breakdown

1838 – Defeated for Speaker

1840 – Defeated for Senate

1843 – Defeated for Congress

1848 – Defeated for Congress again

1855 – Defeated for Senate again

1856 – Defeated for Vice-President

1858 – Defeated for Senate for a third time

In 1861, aged 52, he secured the office of President of the United States and led his country successfully through some massive issues, the American Civil War and the eradication of slavery. Many assembly members were against his liberal proposal of abolishing slavery. It was perceived so radical that seven states immediately ceded and decided to constitute their own country, the Confederate States of America.

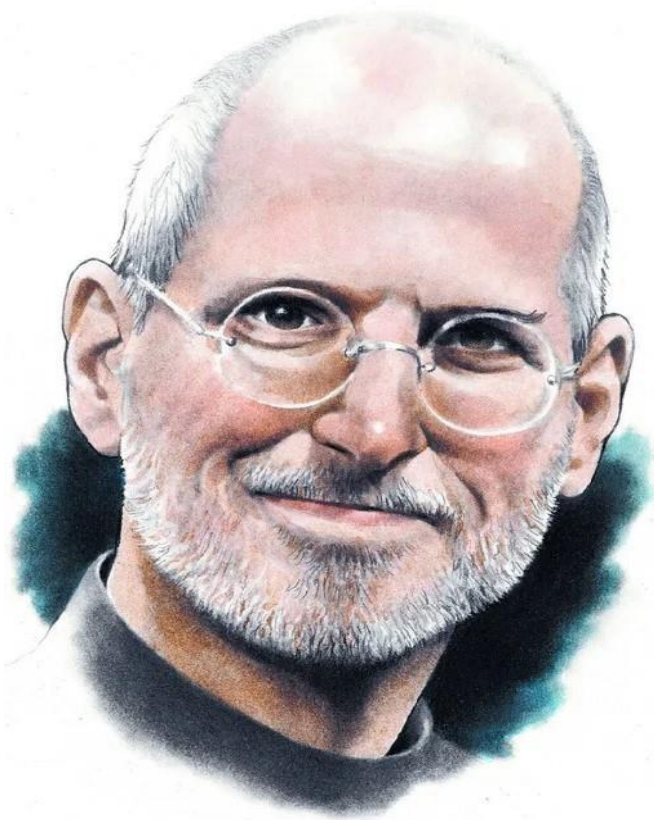
Despite all the defeats and losses, Lincoln never let himself become despair. And it was this trust in his diligence that helped him persevere in every other obstacle. The faith in hard work and integrity that he showed at that time became the reason why his name is celebrated and written in silver lining as one of the greatest leaders to have been born, even 155 years after his death.

Lincoln learned from his rivals, he learned from his destiny and most of all he learnt from his failures.

The following quote of Lincoln sums it all:

"The part was worn and slippery. My foot slipped from under me, knocking the other out of the way, but I recovered and said to myself, 'It's a slip and not a fall'"
-Abraham Lincoln (After losing a senate race-1858)

The man who was fired from his own company.



"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life,"

These were those famed words that were addressed in front of a crowd of eager students in his commencement address at the Stanford University by a creative genius who changed the world of technology forever and left an indelible mark as one of the greatest innovators the world ever saw.

Steve Jobs was born on February 25, 1955, to Abdulfattah Jandali and Joanne Schieble. As his father was a Syrian Muslim, who had migrated to the United

States for his graduate program, it was later claimed by one of his cousins that his real birth name was Abdul Lateef Jandali. Whatever the truth surrounding his childhood was, but one thing was factual, that he never experienced intimacy with his biological parents as the unwed couple believed that they were too young to raise a child. He was later adopted by a working-class family of Steven Paul Jobs and Clara Jobs.

As a kid, he was known for innovations and the exceptional skills he exhibited while carrying out experiments. He enrolled in Homestead High School, where he met his future partner of Apple Inc., Steve Wozniak. Jobs got admission at Reed College in Portland. But he lost interest and dropped out only after 6 months of his enrollment. For the next 18 months, he didn't join any tech or engineering colleges, he rather chose to take a course on calligraphy. His parents and colleagues were well aware of his eccentric behavior. He would survive only on fruits and vegetables for a time and had habituated himself at

staring without blinking. Some of the other of his eccentricities included use of drugs, odd diets and an outright refusal to bathe. These odd behaviors and his high expectations mentally hampered him so much that he decided to go to India and seek spiritual enlightenment, when he was just 19 years old.

Two years later, finally turning his aspirations into actions, he started his venture 'Apple Computers' in the summer of 1976, along with his friend, Steve Wozniak. The only way they could now finance their newly founded entrepreneurship was through garage jobs and selling their personal items.

Soon, they started selling computer machines which were user-friendly, innovative, and affordable; something people hadn't seen or used before. The company started flourishing rapidly and its market value reached \$1.2 billion within 4 years from its inception. Jobs, who was in-charge of the marketing department, then stepped up as CEO of the company.

Since its inception, Apple Computers had to compete with a tech-giant company, IBM, that was founded way back in 1911. IBM had completely dominated the technology market from the time of its inception. Apple focused and tried launching more innovative and user-friendly computers, that were specially targeted to the youths. However, Apple failed miserably to compete with IBM. This was coupled with several defects in its products which culminated into a huge loss to the company, and leaving their customers extremely dissatisfied with the services. John Sculley blamed Jobs for the loss incurred by Apple and all the executives soon joined him to criticize Jobs for flaws in the products.

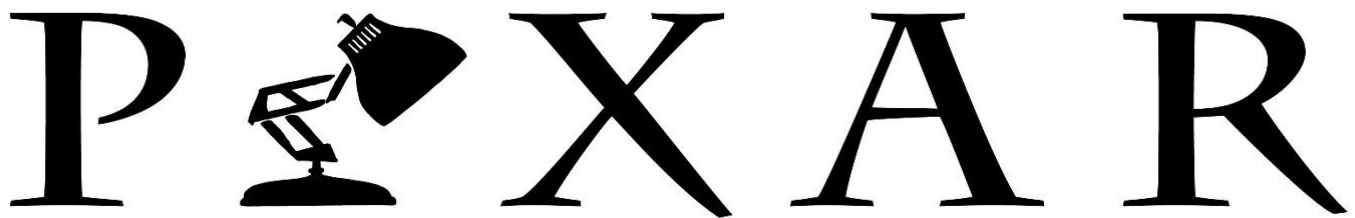
The man who had worked all day and night to put his vision into a reality; the entrepreneur who had toiled hard to nurture and then to strengthen his company, had just been fired from that very company he founded.

Recalling the incident, he said in his commencement speech at the Stanford University:

"We had just released our finest creation - the Macintosh - a year earlier, and I had just turned 30. And then I got fired. How can you get fired from a company you started? Well, as Apple grew, we hired someone who I thought was very

talented to run the company with me, and for the first year or so, things went well. But then our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out. When we did, our Board of Directors sided with him. And so, at 30, I was out... and very publicly out. What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating."

But Jobs had courage to ignite this devastation into a fire that was later going to consolidate his position in front of the world as the forerunner of iOS that is used today in almost every corner of the world. He started his own individual firm manufacturing hardware and software products, NeXT Inc., in 1985. The same year, he bought animation company Pixar. The company produced several of very acclaimed animated movies like Toy Story, Monsters, Inc. and The Incredibles. In no time, the company became so successful that it got the attention of another giant media company, The Walt Disney Company, commonly known as Disney. The two companies collaborated with each other in 2006, making Jobs the largest shareholder of Disney.



Though, NeXT, Inc. and Pixar were well-acclaimed companies doing exceedingly well, but Apple managed to take over and buy these companies for \$429 million. This time they offered Jobs the position of the CEO, as they were fully confident now that no person other than Jobs could be the most deserving CEO of Apple Inc.

This was because of the vision and never dying endeavor of Jobs that the world soon became a witness to the most innovative products including iMac and more famously, iPhone, which has been often described as "revolutionary" and a "game-changer" for the mobile phone industry. It was with the success of

iPhone that Apple became one of the world's most valuable publicly traded companies.

The story of a depressed young boy who travelled to India to discover spirituality; the story of a man who had courage to turn his depression into an enterprise working from his father's garage; the story of an entrepreneur who turned his small venture that was started from a garage into a million dollar company; the story of a CEO who was fired from the same company that he had founded; the story of a businessman who had courage to fight his inhibitions and yet again strive with a new vision; the story of a visionary who went on to revolutionize the world of technology in its entirety, and the story of a warrior who will continue to remain inspiration even after years and years from today, ends here.

The cartoonist who was rejected 300 times.



The creator of Mickey Mouse, an elegant voice actor, producer of world's first animated film, founder of Disneyland Park and the most awarded person in the history of Academy awards.

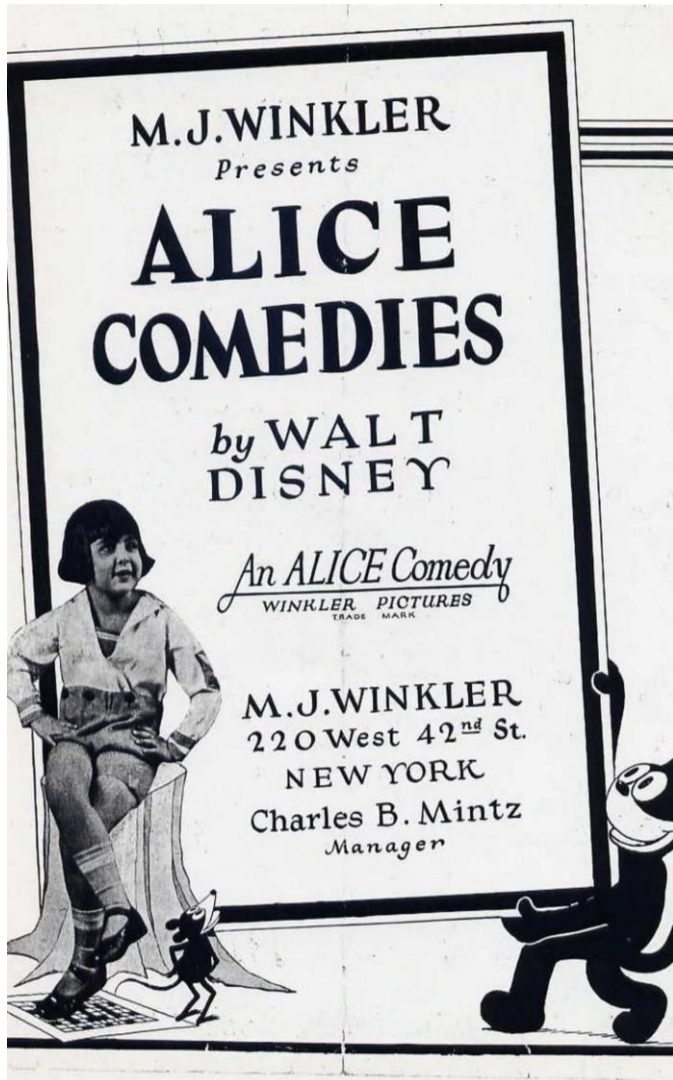
When looking at all these accomplishments, it might appear that for a person who has achieved so much in his life, his artistry must have received good appreciation and his journey should have been smooth and well credited throughout the beginning. But this multifaceted talent whom we all know as Walt Disney today was rejected 300 times by the bankers, who thought his idea of Mickey Mouse was a completely absurd idea.

Disney was born on 5th December, 1901, in Hermosa, Illinois. He was raised along with four other siblings. His family condition was so bad that he had to deliver 1300 newspapers a day at a very young age. Annoyed by the constant work and deprivations, two among his four brothers ran away from their house when he was just 4 years old.

He started drawing from a very young age and used to sell the pictures to his relatives and neighbors. As a child, he used to dream of having his own workplace and he realized that dream when he set up his own animation company in Kansas City, when he was only 19. But he failed to sell even a single cartoon and soon his company went bankrupt. He worked as a cartoonist in a newspaper but the editor fired him after accusing him of being too lazy and someone who lacked any creativity and good ideas.

With still belief and ambitions by his side, Disney left Kansas City for Hollywood. He opened his animation studio in an old garage. For the next 5 years, he worked without any income. His life was beyond miserable and he was left with no place to live and little money to survive. But these adversities emboldened him even more.

He started regaining faith in his abilities after two of his short films “Alice in



Cartoonland” and “Oswald the Rabbit” were among the well acclaimed movies of the year 1928. But to his great dismay, he lost copyright to his much-loved character of Oswald to his distributor, Universal Pictures. After losing the copyright, he had to come with a new character, and he came with Mickey Mouse. But this time, he could neither find a distributor nor were the audience much impressed during the test screening of two of the first films featuring this character.

Finally in his third attempt, and with some luck by his side, he achieved success with the 1928 animated short film, Steamboat Willie. It was in his third endeavor, his new character of Mickey Mouse became a hit and brought great fame to him.

The success of Mickey Mouse prompted Disney to make a full-length animated feature film in 1936. The movie took four years to be made and was released as Fantasia. It cost him a massive amount of what is equivalent to \$25 million today and Disney nearly ran out of money. He was left with no option but to mortgage his house.

Disney's life was similar to a deck of cards where success and failure shuffled between themselves throughout his career. If *Fantasia* was a disaster, then his 1937 movie "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" brought him a big fortune. The film made at a budget of \$1.49 million earned \$418 million, recovering more than 280 times its cost. The movie was considered a masterpiece and was awarded with an honorary Oscar in the following year.



Motivated with this success, he started working on new characters. Among them are the much-loved characters of Goofy, Donald Duck and Pluto Cartoon Series.

In 1955, he opened Disneyland in Anaheim, California. To fund the project, he diversified into television programs from his regular animation movies genre. In particular, two of his TV shows *Walt Disney's Disneyland* and *The Mickey Mouse Club* were very popular among the TV audiences.

In 1966, he succumbed to lung cancer at the age of 65. But the never dying attitude and consistent perseverance that he carried with him, during almost five decades of his career, made him establish as a cultural icon among the masses. All of his creations from witty Mickey Mouse to pretty Cinderella are popular worldwide and still loved by people of all ages alike. His works used to be so beautifully crafted that he was nominated for Academy Awards 59 times, out of which he won 22 in his life. He holds the record for the most number of Academy Awards won by an individual even today.

Walt Disney, who was touted as a person who lacked creativity and innovation, left the world being remembered as the most innovative animator to have been

born. Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Cinderella, Snow White and Peter Pan are all witnesses of his brilliance and hard work.

His message, “All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them”, will continue to resonate and inspire generations for years to come. Most of all, he gave millions of children around the world a reason to smile.

Story of a single jobless mother.



“By every usual standard, I was the biggest failure I knew.”

An extremely successful author with an even more successful novel series, recited these words while making her graduation speech at the Harvard University in 2008. So, what made the author whose volumes of work have been translated into 73 languages, and the copies of which have been sold in millions, to admit being such a failure? It requires some courage for an author of the iconic Harry Potter series and the first writer to achieve the feat of being a billionaire to admit in front of a crowd of hundreds that she had been a biggest failure in her life.

Joanne Kathleen Rowling, more popularly known by her pen name, J.K. Rowling, was born on 31st July, 1965, in Yate, Gloucestershire, in South West England. She was inclined to reading from a very young age and used to spend her time writing fantasy stories as a kid. She conceived her first book titled ‘Rabbit’ when she was only six years old. She became more drawn towards

writing after she discovered her mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, as it was through writing, she found biggest solace for her.

During her college life as a student of University of Exeter, she took up small jobs on a temporary basis but her inclination towards writing never died. She wrote two novels during this time, but sadly she did not find any buyers for them. She was advised by her friends and families to quit writing as she was earning nothing from her loved venture.

Rowling conceived the idea of Harry Potter in 1990, while sitting on a delayed train from Manchester to London King's Cross. She wrote the first three chapters of her book but before she could complete the fourth chapter, she was greeted with the biggest shock of her life. Her mother, the person whom she loved and relied the most, passed away. She was only 25 years then, and this incident was sufficient to completely shatter young Joanne. It became very hard for her to accept the news of the demise of her mother and she left her country to run away from her grief. She left for Portugal and began teaching there. There she met a Portuguese television journalist, Jorge Arantes, and soon, the two got married on 16th October 1992. She first suffered a miscarriage and later gave birth to her daughter, Jessica. Her married life couldn't flourish more, as she suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her husband. And the nuptial relation soon ended; the liaison that ended within 13 months of the marriage.

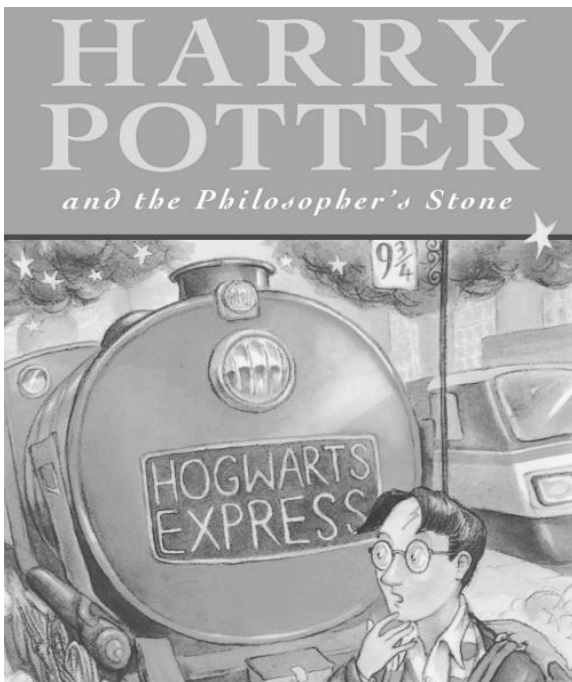
Rowling was left helpless and without a clue on what she was going to do with her life next. She came back to Edinburgh. She was now a poor jobless single mother living in a mouse infested house in Britain. People who knew her started labelling her as a failure and since nothing was changing no matter how hard she tried, she started believing that they were right.

Rowling had to rely entirely on the state welfare benefits. Soon, she fell into a grave of deep depression. She became completely helpless and contemplated suicide. But she prevented herself from taking her own life out of the love and concern for her daughter. Reviving all her defeated senses, she decides to cure her mental agony by taking the help of first love of her life; her writing.

She started spending most of her time writing Harry Potter in a café, with her daughter sleeping in a pram next to her table. She gave a touch of her own personality to every character of her story. Rowling later stated that one of the most admired characters of the series, Hermione Granger, was fully inspired by her own younger self.

Her financial condition was still so poor that she couldn't even afford a computer. She found no option but to manually type the whole novel of 90,000 words all by herself on her old typewriter. She sent her manuscript to 12 different publishers but each of them rejected her script. She started to lose confidence in her writing and started to teach the kids again for the sake of her young daughter.

A year passed by, and one day to her surprise, Bloomsbury Publishing House, gave her book a second chance, after the 8 years old daughter of the chairman, loved her book and wanted its next part. However, the publisher advised Rowling to continue with her job, saying that she couldn't make enough money with children's fantasy books.



In 1997, her first book, Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone, was published. After five months, her book won the prestigious Nestlé Smarties Book Prize. It also won British Children Book of the year, the following year, in 1998. In the same year, an auction was held in the United States to sell the publishing rights of her book. Scottish Arts Council purchased rights for 8000 grants.

Fortunes had just begun to pour into her basket of relentless struggle. The next year, she won Nestlé Smarties Book Prize once again for her second book of the series, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Her third book, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of

Azkaban, also won the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize, making her the first person to win this prize three times in a row.

The filming rights of her first two books were purchased by Warner Bros for a reported payment of \$2,000,000. Rowling. She made sure that the movie was kept close to her book by reviewing the scripts and acting performances.

Both the first two series of her novel won the Children's Book of the Year British Book Award: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone in 1998 and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets in 1999. By July 1999, she had earned \$480 million from the collection of her first three books in the series. Her fourth book, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, broke all the previous records in US and UK by becoming the fastest selling novel of all time. Approximately, five million copies were sold in the first day of sales alone.

Rowling was named author of the year in the British Book Awards twice in 2000 and 2006. In 2001, a movie based on her first novel "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" was released, which became the highest-grossing film of 2001 and the second highest-grossing film of all time.

On 16th July 2005, Rowling released her sixth book of the series, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince". As was almost like a normal natural phenomenon now, the book too broke all the sales records; selling nine million copies within the first day of its release. Following the existing trend, her seventh novel, Half-blood Prince, also won several awards, including the 2006 British Book of the Year Award and the 2006 Royal Mail Award for Scottish Children's Books. Now, Harry Potter was a global brand worth over \$15 billion. Last four books of the series became the fastest selling books in history. The books have been translated in more than 60 languages.

The lady who nearly went homeless once was named as the first billionaire author and second richest female entertainer by Forbes in 2004. Her transition from a sort of rags to riches took her just a few years of patience and self-determination. She was one of only five self-made female billionaires and the first billion-dollar author. Today every series and characters of Harry Potter are loved by both children and adults alike.

To ensure no other mother will have to go through similar plight like she did, she set up the Volant Charitable Trust in 2000, which uses its annual budget to

combat poverty and social inequality, with a particular attention on uplifting of women and children.

The young lady who suffered from severe depression and contemplated suicide, showed bravery to give her life a second chance for the sake of her young daughter. And as an old adage goes, "Fortune favors the brave", this change of attitude along with her adroitness on her work, made her the best-selling author of the world. Today, Joanne has created an online "world" called *Pottermore* for the lovers of Harry Potter.

Confusion of a Genius



Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached

This slogan which sounds so simple yet so resounding was popularized by the Indian monk, Swami Vivekananda, in the 19th century. This had been the success mantra that he believed in and preached the same to the youth.

Let's begin with a short story narrated by Swami Vivekananda:

Once in heaven, there was a discussion among the Gods to decide where the miraculous secret power, the power with which a man can achieve anything in this world, was to

be kept hidden.

One of the Gods suggested that it should be kept hidden in the depths of the Sea. Another said it should be buried on top of the high mountains. The third one thought of a cave in the woods as the right place.

At last, the most intelligent among them said, 'Keep it in the depths of a man's mind. He will never suspect that the power is hidden there because right from his childhood, his mind is prone to wandering and grows up believing that he is a weaker person. He will not look within and explore that power that is already inside him. Only the bravest among them will be able to find it inside them, then use that power and become the greatest of the people.' All gods agreed. The difference between two people lies in their minds. One knows how to tap this power and the other does not.

Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.

This was a story narrated by Swami Vivekananda on how each of the individuals in this universe has an unlimited power within them and how being aware of this potential, he can achieve wonders. But in his youth, Swami ji was rather a very unsatisfied person himself and wanted to understand everything in its depth, rather than linger on its surface. The unbound inquisitiveness and his rationality used to often make him so confused that he would go on asking everyone unless he could satisfy himself with the analogy between their answers and his expectations.

Swami ji was born on 12th January, 1863, as Narendranath Datta, in Kolkata in British India. The religious temperament of his mother had a great effect on shaping his thinking and perceptions. This made him fascinated towards spirituality from a very young age and he spent hours meditating when other kids of his age were busy playing. He grew up to become a very shrewd person, who would emphasize rationalism rather than blindly following a dogma. He would go on exploring until he found an answer that satisfied his inner consciousness.

William Hastie, his principal in the Scottish Church College, had commented on his intelligence as a college student:

“I have traveled far and wide but I have never come across a boy of his talents and possibilities, even in German universities, among philosophical students. He is bound to make a mark in life. His words will one day come true.”

Have you seen God?

In his student life, Naren grew restless for knowing the mystery surrounding the existence of God and wanted to see that divine being before him if such power even existed. His restlessness grew further after he saw his fellow countrymen suffering in poverty and dying of hunger.

Naren would ponder, “If there is a deity, why has he created so much disparity and depravity in this world? Why does an innocent have to be subjected to so much torture and hunger if God is so merciful? If there is God then there must be someone who must have seen him.”

With all these questions unanswered, Naren went seeking for an answer from religious leaders of different faiths. The question he asked was very plain and simple,

“Have you seen God?”

Some failed to answer and the rest who managed to answer were not able to satisfy him with their reasoning.

Back in those days, Naren was influenced by a monotheistic reformist movement, whose philosophies were based on the practical applications of religion. This movement was known as Brahmo Samaj.

Maharishi Devendranath Tagore, was a religious reformer and the leader of Brahmo Samaj. One day, Tagore was staying in a houseboat in one of the Ghats of Ganga and practicing meditation.

Naren went straight away, pushed open the door and questioned the meditating Devendranath,

“Sir, have you seen God?”

Devendranath replied calmly,

“No, my boy. But you have the eyes of a Yogi. Practice meditation, you will have all the answers.”

Naren was not satisfied with the answer. And he continued in his pursuit for a few more months searching the answer but to no avail.

Seeing this relentlessness, one of his cousins told Naren one day that if he really wants to understand what God is, he should visit Shri Ramakrishna, a priest in Kali temple in Dakshineshwar.

To this, Naren responded infuriously,

“What? You ask me to go to an illiterate priest? What can an illiterate person who is a mere priest know about God? I have read Kant, Hegel and Spencer and

after all this you ask me to go to a man who does not even know how to write his own name?"

One day in his literature class, his professor, William Hastie, was explaining the meaning of the word "Trance" that came in one of the poems he was teaching the class. He explained, "Trance" is the feeling which will carry your mind to that state where you can realize how much potential it has. He urged his students that if anyone wants to practically understand the true meaning of the phenomenon of "trance", then they should make a visit to Ramakrishna and understand what this is all about.

Naren was struck by this name twice now. First, by his cousin and then by his professor. After much pondering, he finally decided to pay a visit to Dakshineshwar and the man he had much heard of, Ramakrishna. This proved to be a turning point of his life. His life was never going to be the same again.

He arrived at the Kali temple in Dakshineshwar. Inside the temple, he saw a lean man sitting in a state of deep meditation, and surrounded by a flock of his followers. That man was the main priest of the Dakshineshwar temple. That man was Ramakrishna. A few hours passed by and he decided to wait for the priest to complete his meditation alone.

As soon as Ramakrishna came out of his meditation and relied on his senses, he looked towards the direction Naren was sitting and said, "Naren, you have come. I was waiting for you. Come near me, sing me a Bhajan (hymn) of goddess Kali."

Completely shocked at the remarks, Naren asked with wide eyes open—

"How did you know me? You have never met me before. I have just come here to ask if you have seen God."

Ramakrishna said smiling,



“Yes, I have seen him, my son. I see him just as I see you here, but only in a more intense way. Yes, God can be seen and can be realized. And not only that, you can talk to him in the same way I am talking to you right now.”

For the first time, Naren was face to face with a person who claims to have seen and talked with God and that too daily. He was amused and before he could start any further discussion, Ramakrishna stood up from his seat, came closer to Naren and touched his chest with his feet.

At this touch, something very unusual and mystique happened. Naren's senses stopped working completely and he saw the roof, the walls, the room, the garden and slowly the whole world vanishing in front of him. After that, he saw him disappearing from himself. Sweats rolling, eyes wide open, heart beating at a thumping rate; he was extremely scared that he was facing death. Young Naren had just entered the state of “Trance”, the meaning of the word he had come to discover, which could simply not be endured by his physical body.

Out of fear and confusion on what was happening around him, he asked–

“What are you doing to me? What is happening to me right now? I have my mother at home to look after, I plead with you, stop this.”

Ramakrishna replied,

“Okay. This is enough for now. You will understand this gradually, step by step, my son.”

Naren rushed out of the temple and began to wonder what could have happened to him. He thought that Ramakrishna could have perhaps hypnotized him and contained his mind to an extent not bearable to his body. Whether it was hypnotism or pure magic, but in those few moments of trance, Naren was able to see the things unseen and unthought by him; striking deep in his mind that there may indeed exist a supreme power in the form of God.

It would never be the same again for poor Naren. Something answered and something completely unanswered revolved throughout his mind. Hereafter, he could not help himself but to think more and more of the priest of Dakshineshwar, Shri Ramakrishna.

Naren, then barely 21 years old, encountered unprecedented difficulties in his life. His father passed away and the family fell into a deep financial crunch. His uncle ousted his whole family from their ancestral house and filed a suit in the court. His family was left with no security and with no savings. There was nothing young Naren did not try but failed every time. He found no one who was willing to lend their hand for his family. He went back to Shri Ramakrishna and asked him to appeal to Goddess Kali to relieve the distress of his family.

Ramakrishna said:

“I have never asked for any material gains from the goddess. I won’t be able to do it even now. But if you visit the goddess by yourself and ask, you shall get what you ask for.”

Naren asked:

“But why will god listen to me?”

Ramakrishna replied,

“She will. Just go and ask with an honest mind. Ask whatever you want.”

A broken Naren went inside the temple to offer his prayers. After some moments, he came out.

Ramakrishna asked,

“What did you ask? Did you ask her to relieve the distress of your family?”

Naren said,

“No, I could not ask for that. I don’t know what happened but I asked for wisdom, renunciation and devotion.”

Naren went thrice but every time he ended up asking for wisdom and devotion.

That night his desire to end his suffering had transformed into his hunger for obtaining wisdom and that very night he had transformed from a confused young Naren to an enlightened Swami Vivekananda, who went on to become one of the most revered spiritual leaders. The groundbreaking speech Swami Vivekananda made in the parliament of world religion in 1893, called for an end of disparity between the religions and within the religion. With this eloquent speech, he was covered in the headlines of several newspapers the following day and became the first person to introduce the real essence of Hinduism in front of the world.



It was that one night that rewrote his whole story for once again in such a way that the coming generations for years to come, were going to emulate his work and strive to walk on his path of spiritualism that he had decorated with rationalism all over. This is a stark reminder of the fact that if one continues to show persistence over his task, no matter how many times he would fail or how long it may take, but that one spark of magic is certainly going to fall over his destiny one night, which is going to change his life completely forever.

The Non-Violent Mahatma



After a short story in the life of Swami Vivekananda, let us read the story of another such great who came from the same country Swami ji belonged to and who was also born around the same time as he was. Both of them preached the essence of peace and forgiveness and are revered with utmost respect by the world masses even today. Just a matter of little pity was that these two enlightened men never had a chance to meet each other in person, despite being two of the most influential persons of their era and despite their willingness to meet each other.

Today, he is known to the world as Mahatma Gandhi. He was one of the most prominent figures in history who successfully led his country free from imperialism and he followed an ideology of non-violence in his fight against them, an ideology completely unconventional during the time. This non-violent movement went on to inspire several other major movements of freedom across the world and Gandhi became a major inspiration for several other leaders including Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr., in their own fight against apartheid and segregation.

Mahatma Gandhi was born, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, on 2nd October 1869, in Porbandar, in what was part of British India back then. He was born in a wealthy Gujarati family and in that way his childhood was rather pleasant and he managed to pursue quality education and even travelled to London to obtain the entry qualification for his future legal profession.

After returning and staying in India for some time, he went to South Africa to practice his profession of law, where he came in face to face with apartheid existent there for the first time and saw how his fellow compatriots were forced to live a suppressed life. On the night of June 7, 1893, when he was travelling with a first-class ticket, he was thrown off the train at Pietermaritzburg station after he refused to give up his seat, which as per the law prevalent at that time, was reserved for whites only. This incident affected him very deeply and this very train became the birthplace for all his future revolts.

Twenty-four-year-old Gandhi decided to launch an organization to fight the discrimination against the Indians in South Africa. He named the organization Natal Indian Congress; Natal referring to one South African province, the place where Gandhi first came to serve as a legal counsel for a merchant by the name of Dada Abdulla.

One day, a legislation was passed before the Natal Legislative Assembly that would deprive Indians of any right to vote. Fellow Indian immigrants convinced Gandhi to lead the fight against the legislation. Gandhi fought with full might through his newly founded party but could not revoke the legislation. However, he became successful in drawing international attention towards the injustice being carried on Indians in South Africa.

In 1906, Gandhi organized his first mass civil-disobedience campaign, which he referred to as "Satyagraha" (truth and firmness), in response to the new restrictions imposed on Indians by the South African Transvaal government in the form of The Asiatic Registration Act of 1906. The Act contained provisions requiring every Indian to register himself with the Registrar of Asiatics and carry the registration certificate at all times. Later, his satyagraha covered several other issues including the recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages and demand for the repulsion of The Transvaal Immigration Restriction Act, which restricted Indians from entering the developed and rich province of Transvaal from any other provinces.

In the protests that erupted throughout the province for nearly eight years, Transvaal government imprisoned hundreds of Indians along with Gandhi.

Succumbing to the ongoing Indian protests and mounting international pressures, the South African government agreed to the proposal negotiated by Gandhi that included recognition of Hindu marriages and the abolition of poll taxes for Indians. This success made Gandhi a hero, not only within the Indian diaspora in South Africa but also in his homeland India.

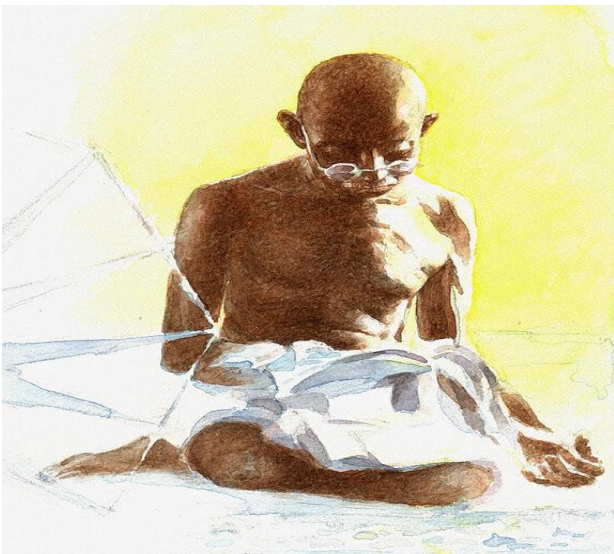
Gandhi made his return to India and on his return, South African statesman, Field Marshal Jan Christian Smuts, wrote, "The saint has left our shores, I sincerely hope forever." Gandhi was given a warm welcome once he arrived in India and was invited by leaders to join the political movement in the fight against the British for the sake of his fellow countrymen. At this proposal, Gandhi responded by saying that to fight for his country, he must first know his country. He travelled from north to south and east to west, often bare footed and clad in a single piece of loincloth known as 'dhoti'. He saw the plight of farmers, people dying deprived of even the most basic necessities and innocents being punished or killed on charge of revolting against the regime.

The year of 1919 turned out to be a major event in Gandhi's life, after 'The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919', popularly known as the Rowlatt Act, was passed. The Act authorized British authorities to imprison any people suspected of sedition without a trial. In response, Gandhi resorted to his old weapon once again: he called for a Satyagraha campaign of peaceful protests and strikes throughout India. This idea to resort for a peaceful protest against the clear atrocity of the British empire was seen with contempt by some leaders who believed that an armed revolution was the only feasible way, if there was any. People who were skeptical of satyagraha chose violent struggle instead. Severe violence broke out, which culminated in the 13th April Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the same year. Brigadier General Reginald Dyer ordered the firing of machine guns into a crowd of unarmed demonstrators, which resulted in the deaths of around 400 people and more than 1,000 injuries, including innocent women and children. Many people managed to survive by jumping into the well present at the Bagh.

This incident saddened and disturbed Gandhi deeply. He began to oppose Britain's mandatory military draft of Indians to serve in World War I and

returned all the medals that he had received from the British empire. He was now fully resolved that the prosperity and development of India and her people was guaranteed only with the ouster of the British empire. But he was still adamant on his approach of non-violence and satyagraha. He upfront dispelled the idea of any violent reprisal against the Britishers or the British government.

Gandhi's non-violent approaches against the British government included calling for mass boycotts of the British products, promotion of locally developed products, urging the government officials to stop working for the Crown, asking the students to stop attending government schools, asking Indian soldiers to leave their posts and citizens to stop paying tax and refraining from purchasing British goods.



Gandhi ji himself adopted this in practice by using a portable spinning wheel to produce his own cloth. The spinning wheel soon became a symbol of Indian independence and self-reliance. During all these times, he never left the support of non-violence.

The relation between him and non-violence was such that even at the time of assuming the leadership of Indian National Congress, he espoused non-violence and non-cooperation to achieve home rule and asserted the same in every of his other speeches.

He resorted to Satyagraha and non-violence and applied the same in every test he was subjected to: whether it was during the riots between Hindus and Muslims or to protest the segregation against the people whom the higher-caste labelled as untouchables or to protest against the atrocities of the British empire. His non-violent approach of protesting and achieving the goal for his people used to be very distinct yet vastly effective.

One of such incidents that is indicative of the distinct approach he adopted took place after the British empire passed the Salts Act in 1930, which not only prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt but also imposed a heavy tax on it, that particularly hit the country's poorest people very hard. Gandhi still forbade the idea



of violence to his party members and followers and instead resorted to a new satyagraha movement, The Salt March, which later came to be popularly known as Dandi March, when he took a march of 390 kilometer to the Arabian Sea to collect salt in a symbolic defiance movement against the atrocious act passed by the British empire. After twenty-four days, when he finally arrived in the coastal town of Dandi along with a few dozen followers, he broke the recently enacted British law by making salt from evaporated seawater. This march sparked several protests and mass civil disobedience throughout India.

Gandhi was soon arrested but the event upraised him into a transcendent figure around the world. Times magazine named him "Man of the Year" for the year 1930.

He undertook 17 fasts during India's freedom struggle. His longest fast lasted 21 days. Fasting was another weapon he used as a part of his philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) along with satyagraha. India finally gained her independence on 15th August, 1947. Many brave hearts contributed for the cause of their nation and many heroes rose during this period who have their own place in history and rightly so.

But despite all of it, during an era when the world was a forced witness to the world war and when imperialism had stretched itself over almost every corner of the world, and during the age when it was a norm for the powerful to annihilate and defeat the righteous weak by using their prowess; Gandhi Ji stood with a rather peculiar notion of non-violence, which was initially

ridiculed not only by the British parliamentarians but leaders within his own country. In response to the criticism over his principle, he famously said, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

Such was the uniqueness attached to this great leader that Albert Einstein once said about Gandhi,

"Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

The conqueror of Robben Island

If I imagine for a moment that suddenly one day a law enforcement officer arrives at my house and apprehends me for an extremely petty crime. He reads a warrant that from that moment to next 1 year, I am going to spend the rest of my time locked up in a prison. With the fear of being away from my family and away from all my liberties looming all over my depleted senses, I can visualize my hands turning cold, my voice stammering and my body shivering out of fear and pity for myself.

If just an imagination of remaining in a seclusion for a year can intimidate our senses completely, what would happen to the sanity of a person who is compelled to dwell in a prison for 27 long years and that too for asking something which correctly belonged to them as their fundamental birth right.

This is the story of Mandela, whom people fondly call Madiba, meaning a revered father figure. Mandela was born Rolihlahla Mandela on 18th July, 1918, in the village of Mvezo in South Africa's Cape Province. It was when he was attending a primary school in Qunu, one of his teachers, Mdingane, gave him the name Nelson, as per the custom prevalent during those times to give every schoolchild a Christian name.

As a child, he was fascinated with the stories of his ancestors' bravery during the war of resistance and he would imagine in his innocent mind of himself making some sort of contribution in the struggle of the people.

During those times, legislation was imposed all over South Africa that ratified the segregationist policies simply based on the color of skin. This racial



segregation was referred to as 'apartheid', meaning apartness in Afrikaans. Under this system, separate residential areas were earmarked for whites and non-whites. Any person who was non-white could not use the public transportation or facilities used by the whites and doing so would lead to immediate fine or severe punishment.

Mandela was the witness and victim of apartheid from the time he held his senses. He saw his elders living a very pitiable life and if someone showed courage to protest, they were thrashed, beaten or killed. The young eyes of Mandela saw this as an insult to the very basic level of a person's dignity.

He got his matriculation degree from Wesleyan secondary school. After that, he enrolled at the University College of Fort for studying Bachelor of Arts but was unable to complete the degree after he was expelled for joining in a student protest. In 1941, he went to Johannesburg, where he started working as a mine security officer. Two years later, he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of South Africa and went back to Fort Hare for his graduation.

After witnessing the increasing disparities between whites and non-whites for years, Mandela decided to enter student politics. In 1944, he joined the African National Congress and co-founded the youth wing of Congress, African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL). Mandela slowly ascended over the ranks within ANCYL. His eloquence and endurance made him extremely popular within his cadres. Soon, the African National Congress embarked on a movement that was called the 'Programme of Action', which involved civil disobedience, boycott of the products and other forms of nonviolent resistance, similar to the one adopted by Mahatma Gandhi during the Quit India movement. African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress entered into a coalition and raised their campaign of civil disobedience against such six unjust laws. The result of this was that 20



people, including Mandela, were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act, 1950, and sentenced to 9 months of labor.

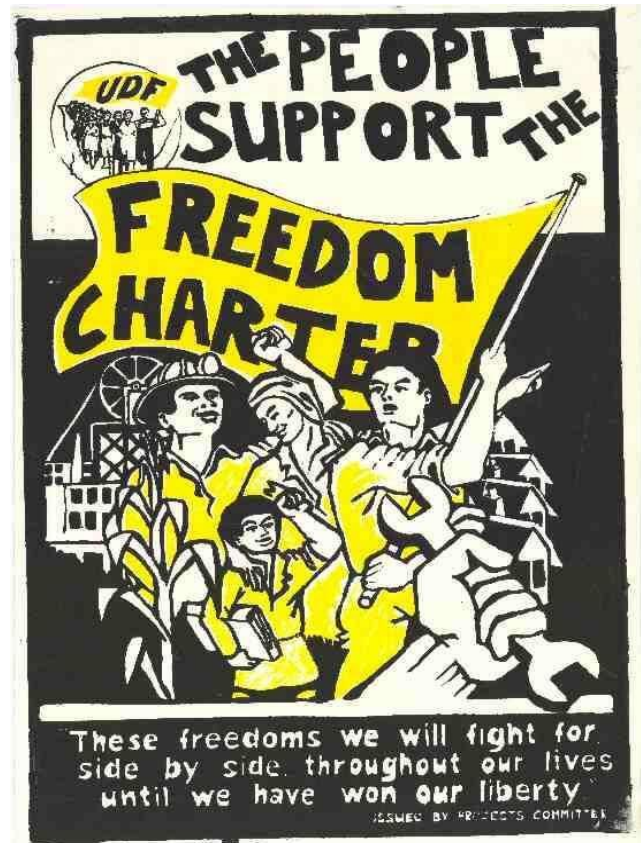
This did not deter Mandela and made his purpose even more resolute. In August 1952, Mandela and his friend Oliver Tambo established South Africa's first law firm, *Mandela & Tambo*, that was run by black partners. The firm soon started to be inundated with clients seeking redressal from the injustice suffered in the hands of repressive apartheid regime. However, as fortune had for his clients, they were bound to wait for several more years to get their justice as the firm was closed down in 1960, after treason charges were put against Mandela.

Treason charges, Imprisonment and the Poem

In 1955, the South African Congress Alliance led by African National Congress issued a document with a declaration, *"The People shall govern!"*. It came to be known as the Freedom Charter. An excerpt taken out from the charter read as:

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people; that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality; that our country will never be

prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities; that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of color, race, sex or belief; And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together -



equals, countrymen and brothers - adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The Freedom Charter became the main excuse for the South African government to initiate the treason trial of 1956 in Johannesburg, where 156 people including Mandela were arrested. The trial lasted for nearly 6 years until 1961. The events that took place in between these years were going to redraft the history of South Africa in the years to come. One of such events was an incident that took place on 21st March, 1960, where police killed 69 unarmed people after more than 700 bullets were fired during a peaceful protest organized by Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) against the pass laws in black township of Sharpeville.

In protest of the massacre, Nelson Mandela, along with the president of ANC, Albert Luthuli, and several other ANC members, burned down their passes that all black South Africans were compulsorily required to carry under the apartheid regime as per the law prevalent at the time. Nine days later on 30th March, thousands of protesters marched on Cape Town to protest the shootings.

The responses from international sides were swift and unanimous; condemning the atrocity and sympathizing with the protesters. On 1st April, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution condemning the killing of peaceful protesters and called for the South African government to abandon the apartheid altogether. This event instigated the United Nations to organize a discussion regarding apartheid for the first time. The UN's General Assembly took no time to declare that apartheid was a violation of the United Nations charter.

For the South African government, the Sharpeville turned out to be a major setback over its authority. The government saw itself being slowly isolated from the rest of the nations. Nevertheless, it was adamant on continuing with its policy concerning the apartheid and the government instead chose to suppress the voices and shun the movement by declaring a state of emergency during when it detained more than 2,000 people. On 8th April, it banned both

African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress from carrying out any political activities.



Perceiving their imminent arrest, members of both the organizations chose to be outlaws and became fugitives. After a few months of hiding, Mandela felt that it was not possible to defeat the apartheid government peacefully. He then co-founded an armed wing of the African National Congress and gave it the name *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (meaning Spear of the Nation). Mandela had now changed his approach of peaceful protest to a military struggle and Sharpeville became the beginning of end of the apartheid.

Mandela spent the next 17 months on the run, trying to gain momentum and support for his armed struggle. A manhunt was launched to capture Mandela and his comrades but he managed to escape his arrest every time by staying in disguise. In October 1961, he moved to a farm, impersonating as a gardener and a cook by the name of David Motsamayi, to evade the police. However, this hide and seek finally ended on 5th August, 1962, when Mandela was arrested along with his fellow activist, Cecil Williams, when they were returning to Johannesburg, after meeting their comrades in KwaZulu-Natal. Rest of the rebel leaders were arrested in a subsequent raid conducted by the police. The trial that ensued after this, came to be known as The Rivonia Trial, after the name of the suburb, from where the leaders had been arrested. The charges labelled against him were of leaving the country without a passport in January, 1962, and inciting workers to go on strike from 29 to 31 of May 1961, against the proclamation of South Africa as a republic. The charge of leaving the country without a passport relates to the clandestine trip he had made to Africa and London to garner support for his armed wing, *uMkhonto we Sizwe*. Also, he had travelled to Oujda, Morocco, to receive military training during the same period.

Mandela was brought before the court. The statement he made there came to be popularly known as *Black man in a white man's court*. He said,

"Whatever sentence Your Worship sees fit to impose upon me for the crime for which I have been convicted before this court, may it rest assured that when my sentence has been completed I will still be moved, as men are always moved, by their consciences; I will still be moved by my dislike of the race discrimination against my people when I come out from serving my sentence, to take up again, as best I can, the struggle for the removal of those injustices until they are finally abolished once and for all."

On 7th November, the trial sentenced him to five years in imprisonment. Then began Mandela's second innings of his life, an extremely arduous jail life.

Initially taken to Pretoria Local Prison, but within next 7 months, Mandela was moved to Robben Island on 27th May, 1963, and again returned to Pretoria.



On 11th June 1964, the following trial convicted Mandela along with his comrades: Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Govan Mbeki, Elias Motsoaledi, Denis Goldberg and Andrew Mlangeni, for sabotage and a day later, the trial sentenced them to life imprisonment. All of them were sent to Robben Island, except Denis Goldberg, who was taken to the whites' section of Pretoria Central Prison as the Robben Island was reserved only for the black prisoners.

The plight of black prisoners inside the Robben Island was even harsher than Indian / Asian and colored prisoners. They were devoid of even the most basic

necessities that were otherwise available as per the prison manual. For example, they were forced to wear slippers and shorts even on a cold day while other prisoners were discounted to wear warmer clothes. The plight and hardship for Mandela was going to aggravate even more as he was a political prisoner who defied the government and who started revolt against the law of the land, namely the law of apartheid. Mandela had been a big pain to the apartheid government and they made sure he suffers no less in the prison.



In this rare picture, Mandela is seen sewing clothes on a cold winter day, wearing his shorts, because black prisoners were not allowed to wear long or warm pants.

Mandela and his fellow activists were forced to undertake hard labor, spending more than a decade breaking rocks in a limestone. Inside the jail, even the most fundamental norms were not followed. Mandela was not allowed to meet with the visitors or any of his relatives. The only communication he could have with his family was through a letter and a single visit lasting for 30 minutes was allowed once every six months. Such harsh restrictions were placed on him that he was not even allowed to attend the funeral of his mother in 1968 and later of his son who was killed in a car accident a year later. The gravity of the pain he endured can be well understood from the fact that he could touch and hold his wife, Winnie Madikizela, only after 21 long years and his daughters, Zeni and Zindzi, were already grown children when they first saw their father.

The letters that used to be sent by the family members were first read by the guards. They would darken or strike the words if they felt that the letters were not strictly personal. Sometimes the letter was so heavily censored that it used to be almost unreadable and what a prisoner would ultimately receive was nothing more than a scrap paper.

An extremely broken-hearted Mandela, once wrote in his letter to his young daughters Zeni, and Zindzi :

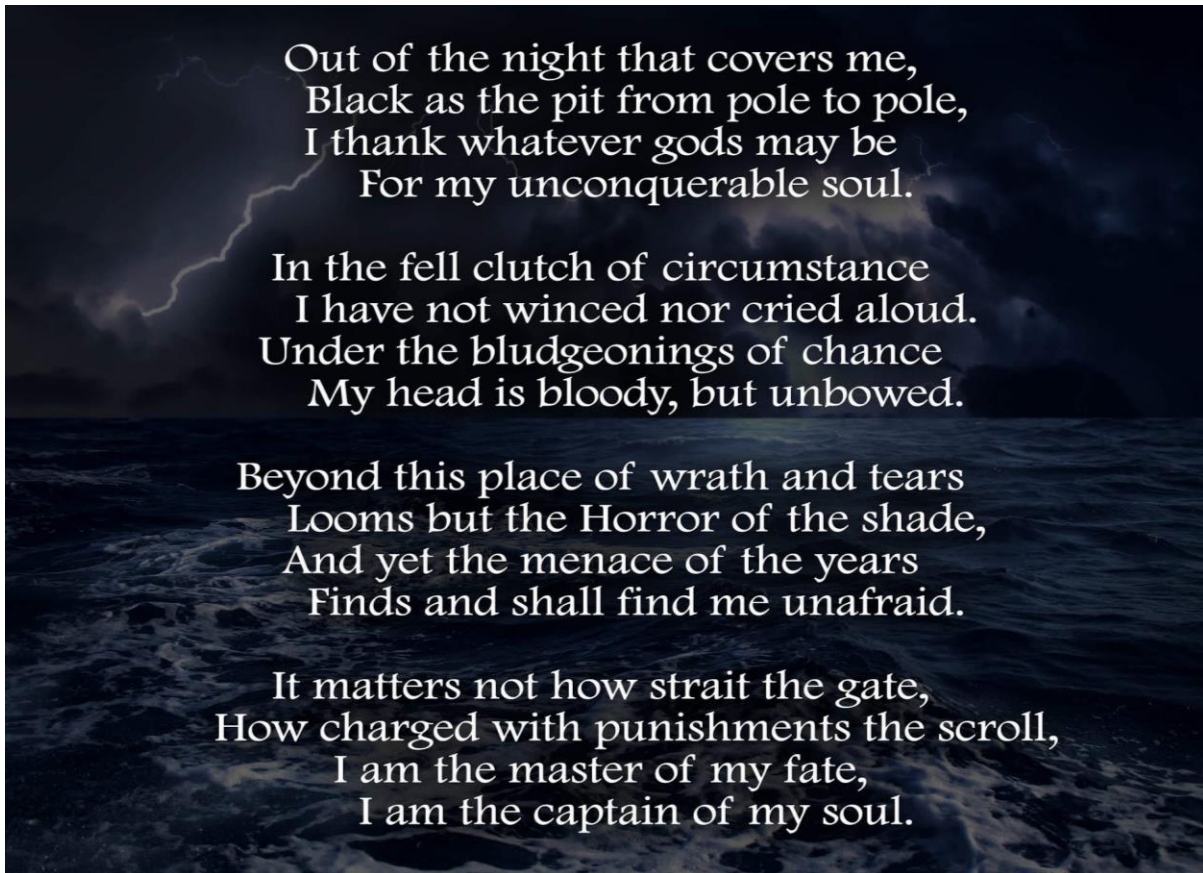
Although these precious letters do not reach, I shall nevertheless keep on trying by writing whenever that is possible. It is some means of passing on to you my warmest love and good wishes, and tends to calm down the shooting pains that hit me whenever I think of you.

In order to weaken his pain and cheer his comrades, who had become immensely downhearted from the prison conditions, he used to frequently read and recite a poem that was very close to his heart. The poem was written by an English poet, William Ernest Henley. This poem has its own inspirational story attached to it. Henley wrote this poem to motivate himself during one of the most painful and traumatic points in his life. He was a mere 16-year-old boy, when he had to get his left leg amputated out of the complications arising from tuberculosis. Although he originally wrote the poem without a title, but later people gave a name to the poem as 'Invictus', meaning unconquerable.

After he was released from prison several years later and became the first black president of South Africa, he said that this poem helped him survive his darkest years and it used to fill his heart with a gleam of brightness when he saw everything around him dim and dark. One particular instance on Mandela's life displays as to how close was this poem actually to him. After he became the president of South Africa and the apartheid was officially ended, there was a wide anti-white sentiment throughout the country. The racial disharmony was so intense that an overwhelming number of black people widely criticized the selection of a white man as the captain of the national rugby team and were also equally vocal of the team consisting of almost all white players. Mandela requested a meeting with the captain of the rugby team, Jacobus Pienaar, and handed him the poem that had inspired and kept

his beaten hopes alive during the most strenuous part of his life. He believed the poem would motivate the captain and the team as much it did to him.

The poem reads as,



As much Mandela was influenced by *Invictus*, people fighting the apartheid outside the prison walls were influenced by Mandela in the same way. It was in the year 1985 that the compelled South African offered to release Mandela but on a condition that he should renounce violence as his political tool and abstain from politics. It should have been a very delightful moment for a person who has already spent more than 20 years in jail to agree the accord and relish the joy of freedom from the appalling prison but the proposal of quitting the fight of independence that he had initiated for the sake of justice, for the sake of his people and for the sake of future generation was not acceptable to virtuous Mandela and he rejected the proposal outright.

The response that Mandela gave while refusing the proposal to quit his fight against the apartheid in return of his own freedom through a letter reads as:

“What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected? Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.”

His refusal to compromise with his fundamentals saw him imprisoned for five more years until he was released on 11th February, 1990. The person who had been the most famous political prisoner for the entire world was a free man now and this 71-year-old warrior became the main architect on eradication of the atrocious apartheid from the face of South Africa forever. In 1994, he became the country's first democratically appointed president after the new interim constitution paved the way for the country's first democratic elections. Even thereafter, he sacrificed the remaining years of his life on transforming his country. He requested and emphasized in front of the black population, which constituted more than 75% of the population of South Africa, to forget what had happened in the past as a chapter in history and that the progress of new South Africa was guaranteed only with the joint effort of Black, White and every other Africans who lived in this land.

Acknowledging the deeds he had done and all the sacrifices he had made, he was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 1993.

The royal, who in spite of being born in the house of prosperous Thembu Royal family, gave away all the amenities and pleasure for the sake of his poor citizens; the prisoner, who in spite of being offered with a blessed opportunity to be released from the prison and be a free man chose to stay in the jail for the sake of his comrades and the president who in spite of being put to 27 long years in prison by the white regime, emphasized on comradeship and harmony among the black and white Africans, breathed his last on 5th December, 2013.

Mandela believed that change is a temporary phenomenon and one needs to embrace, thrive and strive for this change until his last breath. He left with a

message that it was onto the coming generations to continue with the struggle for freedom for the years to come.

In his own words –

The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.

- Nelson Mandela



If every object in this world had emotions and could perceive, the land of Robben Island would have been immensely proud today that she had given refuge to this brave son for these long years, albeit as a prisoner.

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